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New Act For Public Archives of Nova Scotia

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A new Public Archives of Nova Scotia Act was introduced in the legislature today.

The new act reflects the current role and responsibilities of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The existing act has undergone minimal changes since 1929.

Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison praised the Public Archives for its support to the people of Nova Scotia and the government.

"The Public Archives of Nova Scotia is the oldest public archives in Canada," said Mr. Harrison. "More than 18,000 people have walked through the doors of the Public Archives this year alone, making it the second-busiest archives in the country. We need to support the fine job the Public Archives is doing by championing a new act that reflects the archives' valuable contribution to our province."

The Public Archives of Nova Scotia has a wealth of information, from the playing cards used in the lotteries for land distribution in Lunenburg County in 1753, to a letter from Oscar Wilde to Mrs. J. F. Kenney of Halifax in 1882 accepting an invitation to attend a gathering at her home. The Public Archives also has an extensive Titanic collection. Its resources have been used extensively in film production -- materials on the Fuller Brush Man, the Oak Island treasure and the Halifax Explosion have been used in a number of History Channel documentaries.

But the Public Archives is not just for academics -- some 70 per cent of the people using the archives are amateur genealogists searching out the missing branches of their family trees.

The Public Archives of Nova Scotia is responsible for preserving private-sector records of provincial significance and government records of enduring value.

In 1996 the Public Archives mandate was expanded when it merged with Nova Scotia Records Management to provide an integrated archives and records management program for all government records.

The new Public Archives of Nova Scotia Act will empower the archives to develop policies, standards, procedures and services for effective and efficient records management.

A number of organizations endorse the proposed act, including the Council of Nova Scotia Archives, the Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia and the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society.

"The Public Archives of Nova Scotia maintains a rich collection

of both government and private records," said Anita Price, president of the Council of Nova Scotia Archives. "These records represent an immeasurable cultural resource for Nova Scotians and Canadians as a whole. It is encouraging to see the ongoing commitment of the provincial government to the strength and growth of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia in the form of the proposed Public Archives Act."

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Contact: Janet Bryson
Education and Culture
902-424-2795
E-mail: brysonja@gov.ns.ca

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